

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.

**Rick Scott**

Governor

Celeste Philip, MD, MPH

State Surgeon General

Vision: To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation**August 22, 2016**

FLORIDA HEALTH PROMOTES IMPROVED HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR BABIES THROUGH EXCLUSIVE BREASTFEEDING DURING WORLD BREASTFEEDING MONTH

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Port Charlotte, Fla. – The Florida Department of Health in Charlotte County is highlighting the importance of breastfeeding during National Breastfeeding Month. Breastfeeding plays a critical role in healthy development from the very beginning of a child's life.

"Children who are breastfed have a lower risk for developing asthma, obesity, ear infections, pneumonia and sudden infant death syndrome," said Dr. Frank Louis Lepore, Administrator for the Florida Department of Health in Charlotte County. "By supporting more mothers in their efforts to breastfeed, we can improve health outcomes for our youngest Charlotte County residents."

Earlier this year, the department launched the Florida Healthy Babies initiative and has invested nearly two million dollars in helping hospitals around the state promote "Baby Steps to Baby Friendly" in order to support mothers in practicing exclusive breastfeeding for their infants. Breast milk contains antibodies that help protect infants from common childhood illnesses.

The Florida Department of Health in Charlotte County is collaborating with Bayfront Health Port Charlotte's Baby Place to help them take steps towards becoming Baby Friendly. With the support of the department, a total of 16 nurses will complete a Certified Breastfeeding Educator Course by the end of September. This aligns with the efforts of Bayfront Health Port Charlotte and the Florida Department of Health in Charlotte County to pursue the Florida Quest for Quality Maternity Care recognition. This program recognizes maternity hospitals for the progress they make in improving the policies, practice and environments for mothers and babies, with the end goal of becoming certified Baby Friendly.

Bayfront Baby Place has also established a Milk Depot, the first depot in Charlotte County, where women can donate their breast milk for premature babies who would otherwise have to drink formula.

To reach the goal of exclusive breastfeeding for at least six months, mothers need supportive maternity leave policies, flexible work hours, infant and child-care at or near the workplace, and private facilities for expressing and storing breastmilk. It takes time and practice to learn how to breastfeed, both for mother and baby, and to establish a good milk supply.

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For more information about the Florida WIC program call 1-800-342-3556 or visit www.FloridaWIC.org. To learn more about the benefits of breastfeeding visit www.Illi.org; or www.flbreastfeeding.org.

For more information about Baby Steps to Baby Friendly visit the Florida Healthiest Weight [website](#).

For resources on breastfeeding and print outs for working moms, visit our activity page [here](#).

About Healthiest Weight Florida

Healthiest Weight Florida is a public-private collaboration bringing together state agencies, nonprofit organizations, businesses and entire communities to help Florida's children and adults make consistent, informed choices about healthy eating and active living. To learn more about how to be active and make nutritious food choices visit www.healthiestweightflorida.com.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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